**People matter survey facts and myths**

Your privacy is of the utmost importance to us.

Over the years, we have spoken to many of our fellow public sector employees to listen and learn about how to improve and protect your personal data.

This includes how we report on what we collect in the survey to you and your organisation.

Through this process, we’ve also heard from many of you about privacy concerns you still have.

We want you to feel confident when doing the survey. So we’ve put together a list of facts and myths to clear up any confusion.

## Myth: everyone in my organisation can see my free text comments

We only send your free text comments to the head of your organisation or someone they delegate to. Even then, it would be very difficult to identify you.

That’s because we group all the comments into one big file that is separated from all other survey responses.

We never provide the comments with any other survey data, so there is no way to cross-reference free-text comments with any other data.

But we can’t do it all - you can help us maintain your anonymity when you fill out the survey:

* Don’t use your name or colleagues’ names.
* Don’t say what area you work in or the work you’re responsible for.
* Don’t include any other information that will identify you.

## Myth: if I answer truthfully on the demographic questions, you’ll know who I am

We ask you demographic questions to understand more about what the public sector workforce looks like at each organisation – not to identify you as an individual.

It’s nearly impossible for us to know who you are because we:

* group all your data together with other responses so we can’t single out individual responses
* are extra cautious with small numbers – we refuse to give your organisation a demographic breakdown of any question in the survey unless there are at least 10 people from that demographic group
* only provide demographic data if we have 30 responses for the whole organisation
* don’t have any way of knowing who you are as we don’t link demographic answers with any other survey data, everyone uses the same survey link and we don’t collect your name or employee ID.

So, even if you're completely honest on the demographic questions, we will protect your privacy and your identity remains hidden.

## Myth: there is no good reason to collect demographic information

You can select ‘Prefer not to say’ if you’re not comfortable providing demographic information. How you fill out the survey is completely up to you. It’s your data and your right to tell your organisation what you want.

But there are benefits to you in providing this information.

We regularly report back to the Victorian Secretaries Board and employers about the experiences of different groups within the VPS and public sector workforce.

This includes highlighting where some groups have poorer experiences of the workforce and that work is required to make the workplace more inclusive.

This also helps government develop workforce inclusion actions for people like you that work in the public sector such as [Getting to work](https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/workforce-programs/disability-employment/public-sector-action-plan/), [Barring Djinang](https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/workforce-programs/first-peoples-workforce/barring-djinang-first-peoples-workforce-development-framework/) or [Pride is our future](https://www.vic.gov.au/pride-our-future-victorias-lgbtiqa-strategy-2022-32).

The data also:

* tells the public sector [what kind of workforce it has](https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/workforce-data-state-of-the-public-sector/employee-diversity-and-inclusion-2023/)
* helps bring light to the [experiences of different employees](https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/workforce-data-state-of-the-public-sector/data-sets-and-results/past-releases/2022-people-matter-survey-data/insights-and-special-editions/acknowledging-the-lived-experience-of-aboriginal-employees/)
* supports [gender equality reporting](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/insights-and-research).

## Myth: my individual survey responses can be traced back to me

We do a few things to stop individual responses being traced to you.

We send everyone in your organisation the same survey link. This link doesn’t have any personal information or data attached to it that makes it unique to your survey.

We also don’t collect your name, date of birth or employee ID. So there’s nothing to identify you against your responses.

On top of this, we never provide responses in a ‘raw’ format where each individual response is listed line by line.

Your organisation only gets aggregated data – or put another way, they only get the data grouped together in their reports.

Lastly, to make it near impossible to link data back to you, we:

* refuse to give your organisation any data unless we get at least 10 responses from your organisation
* refuse to give your organisation any demographic data unless we get 30 responses

## Myth: I work in a small team or organisation so you’ll be able to work out how everyone answered

If you work in a small team or organisation, we’ve designed our privacy rules with you in mind.

To stop you being identified, we refuse to give your organisation:

* any data about your team unless at least 10 people in your team have done the survey
* any data on specific questions within a team report, unless more than 10 people have answered each question
* any demographic information unless at least 30 people have done the survey in your organisation.

To find out more about how we protect your anonymity and privacy, read our [People matter survey data collection statement](https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/data-collection/about-the-people-matter-survey/data-collection-statement-people-matter-survey/).